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AUTHOR Barlow, Thomas A.
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ABSTRACT

The present controversies concerning competency-based/performance-based teacher education (CB/PBTE) are not new. The scientific approach to teaching, in the form of Herbartian theory, was prevalent at the turn of the century. At the same time however, Dewey's ideas on teaching the whole child and teaching as an art were beginning to enter into educational thinking. Presently, the scientific orientation seems to be more popular, but there are several factors that will determine its fate--and perhaps portend its doom. CB/PBTE uses a single-track model. This leaves little room for imagination and creativity on the part of the teacher. It utilizes a single philosophical approach and fits the student into a mold instead of allowing the student to use a model which he/she, has developed to fit his/her personality and which is congruent with his/her own philosophy. Although advocates of CB/PBTE claim they achieve objectivity in their programs, the subjective judgment of the program developer(s) plays a major role at every step in the program. Finally, CB/PBTE is a technical-mechanical process, and because teaching deals with human beings, it can only be a technical-mechanical undertaking to a very small extent. Teacher education must be as flexible and diverse as the pluralistic society it seeks to serve. (PB)

CB/PBTE - The Wrong Road

The present controversies among educators concerning competency based/performance based teacher education (CB/PBTE) are to a considerable extent a re-enactment of earlier debate over whether teaching is an art or a science.¹ With a few notable exceptions, such as Francis Bacon and John Locke, the scientific approach to the teaching-learning process had garnered little theoretical credence prior to the development of the Herbartian theory of the science of education. Herbart's five-step scientific model for teaching (preparation, presentation, association, generalization, application)² was the first major move for Western education on the path to CB/PBTE. The final step in the Herbartian model, application, fits neatly the CB/PBTE model which includes "assessment of the student's competency."³ Herbart and his disciples pressed hard for the full development of education as a science during the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth -- and with great success. Many, if not most, of the normal schools in this country had been locked into the Herbartian movement by the beginning of this century. Even Pestalozzian educational practice originating as a humanistic approach to teaching, had been filtered through the English-Canadian educational system in such fashion that it emerged at the Oswego (New York) Normal school as little more than a mechanical process of "object teaching."⁴

As Dewey's philosophy and his concept of teaching the whole child began to be woven into the fabric of educational thinking around 1900, the idea of teaching as an art again began to emerge as a strong contender in teacher preparation work.

Three-quarters of a century later the science of education movement has surfaced once more with great vigor and popularity. Again the art versus science debate is joined. Today it is the "humanistic" versus the "quantifiable" debate. Old wine in new bottles!

Humanism cannot be measured objectively any more than can art. The work of the artist, the artistic product, achieves value only in the subjective effect which it has in the view of the individual beholder. One likes or values an artistic product simply because he likes it or values it. For him it has intrinsic, rather than instrumental, value.⁵ Although an individual may value one artistic product more than another,

the reasons for his taste, for his valuation, are individual and not subject to determinate quantification. To dissect and analyze an objet d'art is to detract from its artistic worth, at least to detract from its value as intended by its creator.

The scientist, one who follows the scientific method, seeks to develop those things which have instrumental value, i.e., which have value because they lead to or bring about those things which promote the intrinsically valued. Science does not, at least it has not, created beauty. It can and has, however, developed materials, concepts, methods which contribute, when placed in the hands of the artist, to the creation of beauty, or in the hands of the humanist, to the promotion of the good, of the humanly desirable, of the humanly valued. However, science is neutral; it can just as readily contribute to the creation of ugliness or of the bad (indeed, as it many times has done!). Whether the contribution of science is used to create beauty or ugliness, good or bad, is dependent upon the intent of the user.

It is at this point that the humanistic-oriented educator and the scientific-oriented educator part company. The former views science as making contributions which often are not used to promote the good, the desirable, while the latter sees science as the potential savior of education.

The CB/PBTE controversy hones this schism to a very sharp edge. Recriminations and challenges are cast from one side to the other. For the moment the scientific-oriented have the added advantage of having developed models which easily mesh with the evaluation-accountability schema presently so popular with governmental agencies and the public. The scales are thus tipped, temporarily, at least, in favor of the scientific orientation.⁶

Several factors, however, which are emerging in CB/PBTE eventually will determine its fate as a viable means of preparing teachers -- and may well portend its doom.

1. Single-track model. Many of the performances expected of the teacher trainee are detailed, picayune, sub-professional. They are indicative of the movement to downgrade teaching, to make it a technical, a rote vocation. If this trend were carried to its ultimate logical conclusion, each step in the teaching process would be so minutely described and programed that anyone who could read and follow directions could become a classroom teacher. It eventuates in a single-track model without

alternatives leaving little, if any leeway for the trainee to utilize his imagination, ingenuity, and creative potential. It ignores the individual differences among persons as teachers and the potential which each has to develop his/her own style, and, yes, art of teaching in consonance with his/her personality.

The prominent feature of teacher preparation programs in the past has been their openness in allowing each student to determine for himself, with the guidance and support of his/her master teacher and supervisor, a teaching style which best suited his/her own personality. CB/PBTE appears to assume there is a single teaching style, ergo single educational philosophy, applicable to all teachers. Our task, then as educationists, becomes one of discovering that style and fitting each teacher-aspirant to it.

2. Single philosophical approach. Although many proponents of CB/PBTE will not admit it, their programs are based on the assumption that there is only one way to prepare a teacher, that alternate ways are a waste of time. Students are pushed through the established model, neatly trimmed and fitted into the mold without being given encouragement to explore, try out, discard, accept other means and methods of promoting learning. Indeed, some CB/PBTE programs do provide opportunity for the student to become acquainted with philosophies and theories of education other than the one used in the model, but provide no opportunity for the trainee "to do his own thing," utilizing a model he has developed to fit his own personality and congruent with his own philosophy.

Like many other unitary enterprises CB/PBTE is highly efficient; it simplifies the teacher-training process by eliminating from the program the opportunity for choices by students in their preparation for teaching. It assumes that the right way is the CB/PBTE way -- an assumption many of those in teacher education are unwilling to make.

But are efficiency and simplification (or over-simplification) the criteria which should be used in judging the value of a teacher preparation program? Most logical positivists will answer in the affirmative. Those of other philosophical persuasions will give resoundingly negative responses. CB/PBTE proponents are, wittingly or unwittingly leading teacher education down the avenue of a single philosophy -- logical positivism.

3. Delusion of objectivity. The objectivity which the CB/PBTE advocate claims to achieve in his program is, in large part, at least, a self-delusion.

The subjective judgment of the program developer(s) plays a major role at every step in the program from the initial decisions on scope and sequence of activities to the final

assessment of the competence of the individual student in performing a specific task required by the program. Even though the claim may be made that objectivity dominates the program, facts belie the claim. For example, in determining what tasks are to be performed by the prospective teacher in a given program, the practice appears to be to draw on the expertise of the education professors at the institution, practitioners in the schools, and, in some instances, student teachers. Although the collective judgments of individuals from these groups should - and probably do - provide a more sophisticated professional model than could be obtained from one individual or one group, nonetheless the collective judgments are at best only judgments, fraught with subjectivity and heavily dependent upon the individual's point of reference, his own educational philosophy. The composite point of view of the group does, of course, fit the logical positivist philosophy, for it is within the framework of that philosophy, as we saw above, that the entire schema fits.

4. Technical-mechanical process. No matter how enticingly the components of CB/PBTE programs are dressed up they remain technical in substance and mechanical in execution. If they worked to perfection, they would produce technicians, highly skilled in the mechanical aspects of teaching, but with a complete lack of the humanistic qualities so necessary to the fostering of an optimum teaching-learning situation.

CB/PBTE basically assumes the teaching-learning process to be a "by-the-numbers" sequence in which, if the teacher but follows them properly and in order, the outcome will be the one desired and desirable. (1984 has arrived!)

There are two major assumptions inherent in this. First, teaching is a step-by-step enterprise. In the days when the teacher's task was primarily one of hearing students re-cite their lessons, such an assumption might have been acceptable, but in present-day education it is a wholly invalid one. Teaching, properly carried out, is anything but a step-by-step process. It is a whole congerie of complex interactions among student teacher, other students, materials, equipment, and many other persons and things which make up the student's world. Second, and of even greater import, is the assumption that the established, the accepted way is the correct way. This assumption belies the notion of innovation, of openness to the development of individual creativity within the student teacher.

While admitting there is currently no "satisfactory list of crucial skills and behaviors which a teacher must possess in order to perform reasonably well and to survive in the ordinary classroom with personal satisfaction",⁸ the CB/PBTE advocates go

merrily on their way developing and implementing programs based on hunches, suppositions, and prejudices, hoping to hit on something worthwhile. Meantime they are preparing teachers whose single-track orientation to the profession may well prove detrimental to a generation of school children as well as to the professionalizing of teaching.

Because it deals with human beings, teaching is to only a very small extent a mechanical, technical undertaking. CB/PBTE appears to treat it as almost exclusively so leaving little scope for the individual to apply theories outside those adopted by the program developers. Teaching is to a very high degree a matter of developing human interrelationships both between teacher and student and between student and student. Unless the teacher is provided opportunity for and guidance in learning the many and varied approaches and theories of developing strong and meaningful relationships he/she will never advance beyond the technician level. CB/PBTE programs appear not to have done more than introduce teachers-in-preparation to this important aspect of teaching. Nor will they be able to do so unless their orientation changes drastically. This is an aspect of teaching which cannot be handled in a mechanical fashion, but which can be mastered only through flexibility, personal creativity and imagination geared to each individual relationship.

The teaching-learning process is more than the impartation-acquisition of factual knowledge. It is more than skill development. It is far more a matter of helping students find a basis for developing their own value system, of developing and testing attitudes, beliefs, of developing a spirit of initiative and creativity, of becoming more individualized yet able to function successfully in relationship to other individuals. In these areas CB/PBTE, because it is measurement (or quantification) based, lacks the capability of serving the needs of education in a pluralistic society, and particularly of teacher education which must be as flexible and diverse as the pluralistic society it seeks to serve.

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